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Statement by Jackie W. Sanders, Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs,  
on Kosovo, in the Security Council, September 13, 2006

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We welcome new SRSJ Joachim Rucker to the Council. We are pleased that Mr. Rucker has been appointed by the Secretary General to lead UNMIK at this critical time. Mr. Rucker has done an admirable job as the head of UNMIK's Pillar IV, particularly in advancing the privatization of Kosovo's former state-owned enterprises.

We look forward to supporting his efforts to help UNMIK help build meaningful self-government in Kosovo in accordance with UNSCR 1244.

We also look forward to working closely with UNMIK and Kosovo's provisional government in furthering progress on

Standards implementation. While the Secretary General's recent report notes progress in this area, more must be done to make Kosovo a place where all communities can live freely and safely.

While we applaud Prime Minister Ceku for his government's completion of several of the Contact Group's Priority Standards, ongoing efforts to complete the remaining items must be intensified, paying particular attention to passing internationally-accepted laws on languages and cultural heritage and implementing a comprehensive rental program for housing currently administered by the Kosovo Property Agency.

We strongly condemn the August 26 incident in North Mitrovica that resulted in injuries to several civilians. We call upon all sides to reject any form of violence and note the importance of bringing to justice the individual(s) responsible for this crime and other violent incidents in Kosovo.

We also note with concern recent political developments in northern Kosovo and call upon all parties to act with restraint and in coordination with UNMIK and President Ahtisaari in seeking solutions to the long-standing tensions in this region.

Belgrade must also do its part to help improve the situation in Kosovo. In particular, the government in Serbia should take immediate steps that would support Kosovo Serb participation in local institutions, return cadastral records taken from Kosovo and rescind its directive instructing many Kosovo Serbs not to accept salaries from Kosovo's government.

UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari continues to enjoy our full support, and we look forward to future UNSC consultations with the Secretary General's Special Envoy. It is incumbent upon both Pristina and Belgrade to enhance their cooperation with President Ahtisaari. After eight months of negotiations on technical issues, both sides must now make difficult compromises on decentralization, protection of religious and cultural heritage and community rights.

As noted by the Contact Group in January, all possible efforts should be made to achieve a negotiated settlement in the course of 2006. Delay in resolving Kosovo's status benefits neither side and creates further instability.

Both sides must be realistic about the outcome of the status process. Kosovo must remain multi-ethnic and the settlement must be acceptable to the people of Kosovo. Additionally, there will be no return of Kosovo to the pre-1999 situation, no partition of Kosovo and no union of Kosovo with any other, or part of another country.